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October 7, 1977

Dear Admiral Turner:

We had a good talk on Tuesday and I look forward to the next chapter. Here is the Podhoretz article I promised.

Best,

Daniel P. Moynihan

Honorable Stansfield Turner
Director
The Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D. C. 20505

SP 11-2001

Loyalty & Retribution
to Dick.

THE CULTURE OF APPEASEMENT

A naive pacifism is the dangerous legacy of Vietnam

by Norman Podhoretz

HAS THE UNITED STATES recovered from Vietnam? The general feeling seems to be that it has. Just this past Independence Day, for example, Tom Wicker of the *New York Times* delivered himself of the view that it was "a familiar sort of Fourth"—the kind, he said, "that was commonplace, even predictable, before the long, successive traumas of Vietnam and Watergate brought Americans a decade of self-doubt, self-criticism, self-loathing, on the one hand, and responding denials, anger, and chauvinism on the other." Of course, Wicker's rhetoric loads the case; it is in fact so reminiscent of the fevered atmosphere of the Vietnam era that in itself it casts doubt on the return to normalcy he then goes on to celebrate. But such subtleties aside, many people would agree that we have recovered from Vietnam and that we are back to normal again. I am not one of those people. I think that, far from having put Vietnam behind us, we are still living with it in a thousand different ways. It is there everywhere, a ubiquitous if often eerily invisible presence in our political culture. And it has left us a legacy of influence which threatens to have an even more destructive effect on our future than it has already had on our past.

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of this influence is in the new American attitude toward war. The idea of war has never been as natural or as glamorous to Americans as it used to be to the English or the Germans or the French. We have always tended in this country to think of war as at best a hideous necessity, not as a "continuation of politics by other means" or, alternatively, as an opportunity for heroism, glory, and honor. War to Americans is a calamity when it happens, it is a dirty business while it lasts, and the sooner it can be gotten over with the better. But negative as this attitude may be, it is still a far

cry from the undifferentiated fear, loathing, and revulsion that the prospect of war now seems to inspire in the American mind.

No doubt a rise in pacifist sentiment is inevitable in the wake of any war, especially a war that ends, as Vietnam did, in humiliation and defeat. No doubt, also, the way the war in Vietnam was reported as well as the way it was opposed (a distinction more easily made in theory than it was ever observed in practice) helped to stimulate a vaguely pacifist response. All one heard about and saw was the horrors of war—unredeemed, as it appeared, by any noble purpose. No heroes emerged, only villains and victims, and nothing good was accomplished by American troops and American arms, only evil: only destruction, misery, murder, and guilt.

Norman Podhoretz is the editor of Commentary and the author of Making It and Doings and Undoings.

This is how pacifist ideologues look upon war in general, and the prominent position of pacifist organizations in the protest movement against American military involvement in Vietnam probably influenced the way the war came to be conceived and described. (It is worth noting, however, that the pacifist world was split between those who, in the traditional pacifist spirit, regarded all wars as equally evil and those who, in a newer spirit, were willing to justify and even celebrate "wars of national liberation" and to condemn only "wars of imperialist aggression," such as they imagined the United States was waging in Vietnam.)

But be all that as it may, so powerful did the pacifist tide become that it even reached backward to engulf World War II, probably the most popular war in which the United States had ever participated. To this "Vietnamization" of World War II, as we may call it, two immensely successful novels of the Sixties, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, made perhaps the largest contribution. Although written without reference to Vietnam and published in 1961, just before American troops began to be sent there, *Catch-22* achieved full cultic status only later in the decade, when it could be seized upon to discredit the one war from which something good had almost universally been thought to have come. Not even World War II, the war against Hitler, was worth fighting, said *Catch-22*, to the acclaim of millions; nor, added Vonnegut in his story of the bombing of Dresden, had we acted any less criminally in that war than we were acting in Vietnam.



AS THE PAST was thus Vietnamized, so is the future now being subjected to the same treatment. We have, that is reached a point at which any American military action, anywhere in the